

*A Handbook of the Dragonflies of North America.* By James G. Needham and Hortense Butler Heywood. Charles C. Thomas, Springfield, Illinois. VIII + 378 pages, 149 illustrations, bibliography and index. \$7.00, net.

I do not know how many dragonfly collectors there are in North America at the present time, but their number should be increased once the information is disseminated among naturalists that such a book as this is available. It is more than a readable account of the three hundred and sixty species of dragonflies and damselflies in North America, and their habits and economy. It is a book for collectors, for collectors who are more than mere gatherers of specimens. It is a book for collectors who enjoy the sport of collecting, the swift flight of the insects, the sunlight on their wings, motionless pools, and wet meadows. And the authors must be collectors of this sort also, otherwise they never would have incorporated in their book such sentences as:

“Ten or a dozen specimens were patrolling back and forth just after sunset in one corner of an old pasture near a small brook at the foot of the mountains. They were strong and rapid fliers and extremely difficult to capture. They moved gracefully up and down and in and out, weaving together their paths of flight like the intricate mazes of an old fashioned dance.”

And—

“They were covered with glistening rain drops which were shaken from their wings as they fluttered from perch to perch.”

And again—

“The hairy nymph squats amid the black ooze in stagnant ponds and climbs only a little way out of the water to transform.”

Collecting dragonflies requires more than the mere swinging of a sweep-net. These insects have to be stalked. The collector must have patience, and dexterity, and must study their habits and use some skill in outguessing them, otherwise his efforts will go unrewarded. After reading this Handbook, I wanted to get out my net and make tracks for the nearest open marsh. I had a hankering to see these sleek, brilliantly glittering insects tirelessly and swiftly skimming and wheeling over still water. I wanted to test my patience and knowledge against their powers

of flight and their habits. And then if I were successful, I wanted to bring my captures home and identify them by means of the "keys" which the Handbook provides—"keys," not in eight-point type either, but in ten-point and with the lines so spaced that they invite the collector to use them.

But this is not the kind of review that entomologists, as a rule, expect. I haven't hunted for any typographical errors, and if there are any misspelled scientific names I am blissfully unconscious of them. And in addition I haven't said anything about the contents of the book, its orderly arrangement into a "general" part and a "systematic" part, the former concerned with the adults and immature stages, their habits, histories, structures, etc., and the latter with brief diagnostic descriptions of the species and with all that is known about their habits. And this is all I am going to say about the contents because it bores me frightfully to repeat what the publisher already has printed. It is essentially a book for collectors, a book that will make new collectors, and a book that should stimulate collectors to add more facts to our present knowledge of dragonfly habits, ecology and distribution.—Harry B. Weiss.